

**Testimony of Olivia Carnegie**  
**Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice**  
**Public Hearing Regarding**  
**The Governor's Proposal FY 2016-2017**  
**Biennial Budget**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members. My name is Olivia Carnegie. I am a Community Organizer for the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ) who is dedicated to serving Hartford residents and communities who are disproportionately affected by environmental injustices including the chronic disease asthma. I am writing this letter in support of full funding for the Asthma Outreach and Education Program.

Asthma is a significant public health problem that is increasingly affecting Connecticut residents. This is why I believe that Connecticut residents especially the most vulnerable individuals need to be educated about asthma and how to prevent it. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), “the prevalence of Connecticut adults reporting current asthma increased from 7.8% in 2000 to 9.2% in 2010”. Therefore, a reduction of Asthma Outreach and Education Programs will put Americans with asthma at risk and there would most likely be an increase in the number of people living with asthma.

I would like to share about my experiences of educating Connecticut residents about asthma since I began working at CCEJ last summer. I am responsible for writing CCEJ’s quarterly newsletter, and I have designated a section in the newsletter for the topic of asthma. This newsletter is posted on our website and it is also emailed or mailed to our members. I also speak to hundreds of Connecticut residents when I table at community events like health fairs

and other events. I speak to people who I encounter in public places and people who visit or call our office to discuss Asthma. I have seen how the information that I provide has been beneficial and the people are very grateful.

I tabled at the annual Simpson-Waverly School Community Health Fair in Hartford on October 4, 2014. As people visited our table, I asked if they have asthma or knew of a family member who has asthma. Of the 100 people who signed in and who I spoke to 25 people reported having asthma or knowing of a family member who has asthma.

At this event, I spoke to people and provided informational packets on what is asthma, the signs and symptoms of asthma, the triggers of asthma and how to reduce these triggers, the link between air quality and asthma, preventing asthma, and what to do in the case of an emergency. I provided resources to additional educational materials, and I made referrals to medical providers. I also provided a Compact Disk to parents of children with asthma to be used to teach their children the basics about Asthma. Based on an analysis of an anonymous survey completed by persons who received information at this event, 100% of these individuals felt that they gained valuable information from the CCEJ table.

Furthermore, there is a direct link between educating people about asthma and reducing the cost spent on hospitalization due to asthma. According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, asthma is “consistently one of the most common admitting diagnoses in pediatrics,” and “in 2009, Connecticut spent over \$112 million for acute care due to asthma as a primary diagnosis”. At CCEJ, we strongly believe that our Speakers Bureau Program helps residents to become more aware about asthma and how to manage asthma, and more importantly, this awareness can save lives. In turn, if residents manage their asthma, then there will be no

need to be hospitalized due to asthma; and, this will reduce the amount of money the state spends on asthma hospitalization.

Please help the thousands of Connecticut Residents living with asthma by supporting the full funding of the Asthma Outreach and Education Program. Thank you for giving me this opportunity to testify.